

i hear your heart beating right in time with mine

by yueie09

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Summary: An AU set in a world where: Hinata and Kageyama are still volleyball dorks, they still argue a lot and they grow up as best friends.

1. i hear your heart beating right in time

##

The cherry trees were blossoming and Shouyou had to pause to watch them from a minute, ignoring the sounds of parents calling for their kids and the flashes of photos being taken around him. All morning he'd been feeling a strange mix of excitement and anxiousness and he hasn't decided what to label it just yet. The tube-shaped object in his hand is also a matter of thought for him, one he doesn't want to think about now.

"Shou-chan! I haven't taken your picture with Tobio-chan yet~!"

And then,

"Sho! Quit being slow and come here already!"

He grinned.

##

Mommy's hands are really soft, Shouyou thought as they pet his hair, feeling sleepy from her touch. They were in the park and he wanted to play with the other kids but she had told him they were waiting for someone and that he had to stay, promising that he would be able to play later.

He blinked as she crouched down in front of him, giving him a smile.

"_Shou-chan, we're going to be meeting a friend of mommy's from school. They just moved here from the big city. Be a good boy and call her Auntie, all right?" She told him._

Shouyou nodded, curious, just as someone called his mother's name and then a woman was walking towards them. He watched as she waved at his mother and came to a stop in front of them. She was really pretty, with pretty black hair and pretty gray eyes, but then she wasn't as pretty as his mommy. She smiled when she saw him.

"_Oh! Is this Shouyou? My, he's so cute! Hi there! How are you?"_

He grinned.

"_My name is Hinata Shouyou from Yoyogi Preschool! I-I'm pleased to m-meet you!"_

The lady laughed, reaching over to pat his head.

"_It's nice to meet you too, Shou-chan. This is my son, Tobio." She said, gesturing to the boy beside her._

Shouyou looked at him, frowned at his face and turned to his mother.

"_Mommy, is he okay? He looks like he ate something bad. His face is weird."_

"_W-what did you say?!"_

_Surprised, Shouyou looked back at the boy in front of him, immediately scrambling to hide in his mother's skirt when he saw his face. _

"_But it's true! And your face is really scary right now!" _

The other boy's face turned red and his eyebrows drew even tighter together, making them look like a straight line. Shouyou stared, fascinated.

"_W-well, your face looks stupid too! Likeâ€”like the most stupidest thing ever!" _

_Shouyou's face crumpled. _

"_YOU'RE MEAN! STUPID MEANIE HEAD!" He bawled, letting go of his mother's hand to crouch down and cry._

"_Tobio! You say sorry to Shouyou right now!"_

"_But he started it!" He heard Tobio whine. Shouyou howled even louder, making the other kids and their parents stare at the commotion. His mother desperately tried to calm him, to no avail._

"_NOW, TOBIO!"_

_There was a moment's pause before he heard some shuffling. Opening his eyes, he saw Tobio crouching down to his level, looking grumpy

until he saw Shouyou looking at him, face wet with tears. Now looking guilty, he mumbled, _

"_I'm sorry for calling you stupid."_

Sniffing, Shouyou turned to look up at his mother. She smiled and nodded.

"_I'm sorry for saying your face is weird." He replied, rubbing at his eyes._

Tobio nodded. After a second, he stood up and put his hands on his pockets as if he was looking for something. A moment later, he pulled out a handkerchief and offered it to Shouyou.

"_Mommy always has me bring hankies. Here you can have it." _

He received a wobbly smile in return.

##

With an impatient sigh, Shouyou watched the ball as it was thrown into the air for the _hundredth_ time and landed on the ground with an unceremonious thud, Tobio scowling at the result. He tilted his head and slumped on the floor of the foyer. He didn't really understand what Tobio was trying to do at all, considering the other boy had been doing it for a long time already today. They were supposed to be taking their naps but Tobio had refused to settle down on their shared futon and kept sitting up, the ball his dad had given him for his birthday on his lap even though Auntie had told him to stop playing with it and get to sleep, going so far as threatening to take it away. In the end, after Tobio had looked devastated at the thought, she hadn't taken it and instead had let him out to play in the backyard, shooing Shouyou away too.

"I know you Shou-chan. You'll only end up following him when you think I'm not paying attention." She said, patting his head fondly.

"It's okay, Auntie! 'Yama and I are best friends and best friends are supposed to be together always!" He chirped, smiling.

He'd been given two cookies for his trouble, one for him and one for Tobio, and sent on his way. He had eaten his on the way and after being ignored several times by his friend, ate the other cookie in revenge. He _hated_ it when Tobio ignored him.

Auntie was hanging clothes on the other side of the yard and Shouyou had already offered to help her earlier because he was _so_ bored but she said no, telling him to keep an eye on her son. Shouyou thought it was easy since he didn't have to follow Tobio anywhere like he used to before _the ball_ arrived. Shouyou _really_ hated that ball. Tobio used to play with him a lot before it came and now he was being ignored! Pouting, he slumped even further.

"Stupid ball. Stupid 'Yama!" He muttered to himself.

'_Pay attention to me!_' He wanted to scream.

After watching the ball fly wobbly in the air for the _hundredth_

time and his friend get more and more upset, he asked loudly, making sure his irate friend heard him,

"Yama! What're you doing?!"

"What do you think, dummy?! I'm trying to toss it!" Tobio replied, throwing it again.

They watched it sail through the air straight to the tree, getting stuck in between the branches. Tobio glared up at it as if it was going to get unstuck through the power of his eyes. Shouyou suspected it could, his friend had pretty crazy eyes sometimes.

"Toss? Aren't you just throwing it?" Shouyou asked the back of Tobio's head, confused.

Tobio whipped around and glared at him. Shouyou blinked, non-plussed.

"If you paid attention to my Dad when he was telling us about it, you would know, idiot!" Tobio said, turning his attention back to the ball. Shouyou's eyes narrowed.

"Well, I don't like baseball or football or whatever your stupid game is called so why would I care what a toss is?! It's stupid!" He snapped, standing up.

His friend turned so fast it made him dizzy just by looking at him. Blue eyes glowered at him. Shouyou narrowed his in reply.

"What did you say?!"

"I said it's stupid! It's a stupid game and I hate it!" He screamed, stomping towards the other boy and hitting him repeatedly in the chest, ignoring Tobio's '_Hey, stop that!_' and continued, "You're always going away and you forget about me! You don't pay attention to me anymore and I hate it! I hate it!"

Tobio finally got a hold on his wrists and held them down, staring at him in bewilderment.

"What are you talking about?" He asked.

"Ever since you got that stupid ball, all you've done is practice and practice! You haven't paid attention to me at all! It's just a stupid ball! "

"Haaaa?" was the baffled reply.

Shouyou let out a frustrated noise and stomped on Tobio's foot. His friend yelped and let go of him to crouch down over his hurting appendage.

"Stupid Kageyama! Dumbass Kageyama!" He yelled angrily, turning and trudging off, Mr. Suzuki forgotten behind him.

Tobio stared after him, utterly confused.

##

_Shouyou was trying not to cry where he was sitting in the middle of the playground, biting his lip and squeezing his eyes shut. His leg was hurting and he was scared because his mommy wasn't there to make it go away with her kisses. _

He could die!

His eyes opened at that thought and he gasped. Everyone knew that when you got hurt and weren't treated then you died! Oh no! He didn't want to die! Sniffing, he tried to stand up and ended up crying out at the pain. He didn't want to cry but it hurt so bad.

"_Mommy!" He whimpered, lip trembling and clutching Suzuki-san tighter to his chest._

Suddenly, a shadow loomed over him and he looked up.

"_To-chan! My leg hurts!" He wailed, now clasping Tobio's shirt instead and pointed to said appendage._

"_That's your knee, dummy!" Tobio said, putting a comforting hand on his hair. He crouched down and looked at Shouyou's skinned knee. He looked like he wanted to poke it and Shouyou whimpered at the thought, shying away._

"_It doesn't look too bad." Tobio stated, standing up again. _

"_But it hurts!" He whined, pulling at his friend's shirt._

"'_Kay. Wait here. I'll go call sensei.'"_

He nodded and buried his face in Suzuki-san's fur, sniffing. A few minutes later, he was carried off to the clinic, Tobio following closely behind them, where he cried and cried because now it hurt even more. The nurse wasn't stopping even though he told her it hurt!

"_To-chan, it hurts." He whimpered to his one ally, who had been looking really meanly at the nurse for his sake. His hand was squeezed a second later._

"_Hey, don't call me that." Tobio said suddenly._

"_Huh?"_

"_Call me KAGEYAMA. K-A-G-E-Y-A-M-A." He spelled out, chest puffing out in pride. He'd been working hard to memorize it for days and was pleased that he could spell it out perfectly now._

Shouyou frowned, completely forgetting about his knee at the face of his friend's new accomplishment. He wanted to spell his name aloud too!

"_K-A-Gâ€"eh? What was it again?" _

"_K-A-G-E-Y-A-M-A!" Tobio repeated, smug at being able to do it again._

Shouyou pouted.

"_That's not fair! You were going too fast!" He whined._

Tobio scowled at him, letting go of his hand. The nurse shook her head fondly, anticipating another fight between the two. She smoothed down a bandage on Shouyou's knee. The two were known to have fights that were quickly resolved the same day so she wasn't too worried. She'd keep an eye on them though, before they got too loud and disturbed the other children.

"_No I wasn't!" Tobio denied hotly, crossing his arms. "You're just stupid!"_

"_I'm not! I'm not stupid! You take that back, you meanie head!" Shouyou screamed, immediately prompting the nurse to try to shush them._

"_No! You're stupid! Stupid head Hinata!"_

Shouyou's face crumpled and he jumped out of the bed. He started hitting Tobio's face with Suzuki-san repeatedly, shrieking "I hate you I hate you I hate you! Stupid Tobio!" until the nurse pried him and sent them back to their classroom where their teacher had them sit in the time out corner. Tobio held out his hand and Shouyou beamed, accepting the truce.

Later, when they were lying on their blankets next to each other for nap time, Tobio rolled over to face him.

"_I'm sorry for calling you stupid." He said, placing a hand in the space between them with its palm up._

Shouyou smiled sleepily and grabbed it. Tobio immediately scooted closer until they ended up sharing the same blanket.

"_It's okay. I didn't mean to say I hate you too. Now we're even."_

Tobio looked relieved at that.

"_I don't like it when you call me that." He said quietly, lower lip jutting out slightly._

Shouyou blinked slowly, yawning.

"_Why not?"_

He wrinkled his nose.

"_It's for babies. I'm not a baby anymore." He explained, tone petulant._

"_But I can't call you Kageyama! That's your mommy and daddy! It would be confusing!" He complained._

"_Call me something else, then."_

Shouyou paused thoughtfully, brightening a few moments later.

"_I know! How about 'Yama'? Sensei said it means 'mountain'! And mountains are cool and strong-looking aren't they? I like them." He

stated, snuggling into his best friend's side and feeling an arm wound around him and dragging him closer._

Tobio thought about it for a second before nodding.

" '_Kay.' _

##

There was a knock on his door, and he heard his mom's muffled voice asking him if he was alright. Shouyou didn't know if he was alright, all he knew was that he still angryâ€"but it was slowly giving away to the hurt and guilt he'd been feeling the past couple of weeks. He sat up. This was no good. He hadn't meant to explode his feelings all over Tobio, he was sure his best friend hated him now. He hadn't even talked to him all day yesterday at school. Shouyou knew how important volleyball was to Tobio, it was the only thing his dad and him bonded over, the only thing that made him feel connected to his overworked and absent father. He frowned at the thought of said man. Tobio's dad was a jerk!

Waving the thought of the man away, he plopped down again. But it wasn't fair. Volleyball shouldn't be taking his best friend away from himâ€"Tobio was his! They were best friends and nothing should come between that.

Shouyou hugged his pillow tighter, missing the jerk already. He sighed, rolling over and putting the pillow over his eyes. He really did feel guilty though. He'd been selfish and hurt his friend's feelingsâ€"best friends didn't do that to each other.

"I guess I should go say sorry. I don't want him to hate me." He mumbled.

Distantly, he heard the doorknob turn and the door open. Soft footsteps walking towards him and his bed dipped with the weight of another person. Thinking it was his mom checking up on him, he ignored it and smooshed the pillow even harder on his eyes, not wanting to talk. Suddenly, he felt a warm weight across his stomach and arms around his torso.

"Sorry."

He lifted the pillow away from him and peered down at Tobio, whose face was digging into his belly.

"My mom told me what you meant. I'm sorry." He heard his friend mumble.

Shouyou felt as though his heart would burst in his chest, feeling warm and tingly and really really good. He grinned for a moment before the guilt slammed down on all of his happy feelings. Lips drooping and eyes turning down at the corners, he gently pushed on Tobio's shoulder to make him sit up. Once they were sitting face to face, he said, holding onto the other's hands,

"I'm sorry too. I was being selfish. I know how important volleyball is to you. I'll try not to be a brat about it anymore."

Tobio looked at him for a second before nodding. Shouyou beamed and hugged him, nuzzling his shirt.

"So you knew the game's called volleyball?" Tobio said nonchalantly after a few moments of silence.

Shouyou blushed.

"W-well, yeah! I'm not as stupid as you think, you know." He stammered, slowly letting go and avoiding his best friend's eyes. He sprang up from the bed and dug around his bag, pretending to be looking for something.

He could literally feel Tobio's stare at the back of his head but he refused to look. He heard some rustling and felt something poke him on the back. He turned.

"Did you just kick me?!" He asked, incredulous.

"You wanna play volleyball with me? I won't make fun of you when you fall on your face. Well, I'll try not to." Tobio replied, ignoring his question.

His voice was taunting and his lips were twisted into a smirk. Shouyou immediately felt his hackles rise.

"Oh yeah?! We'll see about that! Don't be so cocky, you jerk! And stop smirking, it's creeping me out!"

Whack.

"Ow!"

##

"Shou-chan, don't you find Kageyama-kun scary?" Izumin asked as he patted down the roof of their castle, voice low and cautious.

Shouyou, who had been busy trying to make a wall to surround their castle with, looked up in confusion.

"Huh? Why would he be scary?" He asked.

Izumin bit his lip and shrugged, looking nervous and eyes darting around the playground before scooping more sand out of the play box and starting to build a wall on his side. Shouyou tilted his head curiously and looked around for Tobio, wondering where he had run off to. He'd been with them earlier but quickly proclaimed their game boring and left, much to Shouyou's dismay and Izumin's relief. He saw him a few ways away from the football game that was being held, although it looked more like a game of basketball than football, seeing as the ball wasn't being kicked as much as carried around while the players shrieked and ran around. The other kids seemed to be inching away from Tobio slowly, maybe because he was looking grumpy again. He watched his friend for a while before deeming him to be okay, it wasn't his bad grumpy face, just his normal one, so there was nothing to be worried about.

He turned back to the castle in front of him just as Izumin spoke up.

"_Well, he never smiles, you know?" Izumin said, shrugging again. "Andâ€"and he's so mean too. He's pretty scary. Everyone says so."_

Shouyou frowned.

"_Eh? 'Yama's not that mean! And that's just the way he's always lookedâ€"even when we were littler. He's not scary at all." He defended._

Izumin didn't look convinced.

"_Um, really?" _

Shouyou nodded, smiling.

"'_Yama's like candy, you know? He's hard on the outside but really soft and gooey on the inside! He can be mean sometimes, but he always says sorry when he gets really mean so it's okay. Mommy says that sometimes he just doesn't know how to e-e-express himself better. " He explained, attention back on the castle. "I'm his bestest best friend so I would know."_

"_If you say so, Shou-chan."_

##

His hands stung and he felt his heart racing against his chest. His arm hurt a bit and his legs were trembling from the height of his jump. He stared at his red palm and marveled.

"Hey, what position are you?"

Tobio turned to him from where he'd picked up the fallen ball, mouth open in a way that was usually followed by a loud _listen to me when I'm talking, idiot_ but paused when he saw Shouyou's face. He blinked and faced the net.

"I'm a setter."

##

Shouyou squeezed Tobio's hand, feeling his heart race, nervous and excited. He was staring at the clock, wishing it would go faster. Tobio rolled his eyes.

"_Calm down, idiot." He scolded but his was tone gentle._

"_But! 'Yama! I can't! I can't calm down!" Shouyou squeaked, visibly vibrating in his seat._

_They were sitting in the living room at the Kageyama house, waiting for Shouyou's parents to arrive. He had been staying over the last few days while his parents were in the hospital. They were about to arrive in a few minutes. _

"_Do you wanna play for a few minutes? Until your mom and dad get

here?" Tobio asked._

_Instead of answering, Shouyou immediately jumped up from the couch and dragged him out of the house with the hand still holding onto his. Tobio managed to call out _'Mom, we'll be in the backyard!'_ before the door shut behind them. He let Shouyou lead him to the court, something that his dad had built a few years ago, and put the ball in his hands without a comment._

"_Toss!" Shouyou instantly demanded._

Tobio let out an exasperated sigh

"_Make sure you hit it this time, dumbass." He called out teasingly, lifting the ball and gently tossing it, gritting his teeth as it swayed uncertainly in the air. He still wasn't able to toss it to where he wanted to, not unless he gave up some power and speed. And when the times where he somehow managed to, it was predictably weak and easily hittable, something that frustrated him a good deal. He still needed to train a lot, and learn a bunch of things before he was at national-level._

As expected, Shouyou was able to hit it. He turned to his scowling best friend and yelled, beaming,

"_See?! I'm not hopeless after all!"_

"_Hmph."_

"_Boys! They're here! Come quickly!" Tobio's mother called out, bringing an abrupt halt to their practice._

_With a delighted shout, Shouyou grabbed the other boy's wrist and immediately scrambled inside, running through the hallway to the living room. His parents were sitting on the couch and his mother was carrying a small bundle in her arms. He ran to his parent's side, still dragging Tobio along, peered down at the bundle and saw chubby pink cheeks, big round eyes, a small button nose and mouth, and a familiar tuft of red hair. _

"_Natsu-chan! Natsu-chan you're finally here!" He gushed._

He gasped, enraptured, as small hands reached out. Cautiously, he offered a finger and beamed when it was immediately held onto.

"_Yama! Yama, look! She's holding my finger! My baby sister!" He babbled, unable to take his eyes off of her. His parents laughed._

"_Yeah, I can see that, stupid." Tobio snapped, although it lacked its usual bite as the little girl turned her attention to him, her eyes curious._

_Admittedly, he was a little apprehensive as to how she would react to his presence. He knew the other little kids were a little scared of him, which he never did understand, and cried if he so much looked at them. He didn't want that do happen with Shouyou's little sister, though. He wanted to be liked by her, which was surprising because he wasn't like that with the other kids, but she was _Shouyou's_ sister,

which made a lot of difference._

She stared at him for a long time and Tobio was starting to think he would have to back off so she didn't end up crying, when she suddenly reached out and made grabby hands in his direction, smiling cutely. Shouyou nudged him when he only stared back at her, visibly surprised at her delight. Copying what his best friend had done earlier, he offered her his pointy finger and jumped when she immediately clamped onto it with her small, soft hands.

"_Natsu-chan! We're your big brothers and we're gonna take care of you from now on, okay? We love you!" Shouyou babbled happily, caressing her cheeks with his other hand, eyes wide with adoration._

Natsu giggled. Tobio fell a little more in love.

##

It happened rather unexpectedly one day.

As usual, they were practicing in the court in the Kageyama family's back yard. As usual, Shouyou was hitting the balls as much as was missing them. And as usual, Tobio was praising and chiding him in turns, although admittedly he was doing more of the latter than the former. Shouyou had the speed and the agility to be _better_ than he currently was, Tobio knew. His best friend would be _amazing_ when the time came, and together they would be incredible; but for now, they had to keep practicing and looking for that something to make them really _click_.

He was getting ready to toss, fingers poised, when he heard a loud crash, like glass breaking, come from the house. Jolted out of his concentration, he jumped and the ball slipped from his fingers when they twitched in surprise. It flew through the air, spinning far more rapidly than usual, towards Shouyou who had jumped, who didn't know, who might get hitâ€

"Sho!"

Thwack.

He blinked.

"Yama! Did you see that?! I hit it! I hit it perfectly! Man, that felt awesome! It was like _bam!_ when it hit my hand! Let's do it again!"

Tobio slowly exhaled, willing his heart beat to calm down. _Shouyou was alright, he didn't get hurt, he had to get a grip, Shouyou was okay and he hit the ball_â€

"Wait, you hit the ball?!" He asked, stunned.

Shouyou looked at him strangely.

"Um, yeah? Didn't you see? Look! My hand's so red!"

He stared at his best friend's proffered hand to the ball lying on the other side of the net, uncomprehending. That ball, it was too

fast and it should've been impossible to catch, much less spike. Even pros would've had a hard time with it and Shouyou—he'd actually hit it and it would have scored too, if they had been in an official match.

Shouyou had hit it.

Slowly, he felt a smile stretch his lips. They really were going to be amazing.

"Uh, Yama? What are you thinking about? You're kinda freaking me out with that smile of yours." He heard the other boy whimper, audibly scared.

His hand shot out to grip Shouyou's hair and pulled, earning a yelp.

"It's true, though! Your smile is creepy as heck—ow! Ow! Hey, Yama! Stop it!" Shouyou whined, trying to pry him off.

Abruptly, he let go and went off to pick up the ball, calling out,

"Get ready. We'll be trying it again."

##

"_Hey dad, will you play volleyball with me?_"

His dad didn't look at him. He hadn't looked at him for days, maybe even weeks.

"_I can't, sport. Maybe next time._"

He nodded to the shut door.

##

"Uwah!" Shouyou cried, body wiggling in excitement as the crowd went wild at the ace's slam through the opposing blockers. "The ace is so cool! That spike went through like it was nothing!"

"Pipe down, you idiot! You're so loud!" Tobio scolded, pushing at his shoulders to stop him from moving around so much.

Shouyou ignored him, jumping up from his seat on the floor when the ace scored again and the referee whistled to signal the end of the match; yelling so loudly he almost out-yelled the noise from the TV. He turned to his best friend and hugged him, swept up along with the exhilaration of the team's win on the screen.

"I'm gonna be an ace too! You'll be my setter and I'm gonna spike all your tosses! We'll win every match, from the nationals to the Olympics!"

Tobio scowled and pulled at the back of his shirt, trying to get him off of him.

"Oi! Don't decide that all by yourself!" He chided, eventually giving up. His best friend was stuck to him like they'd been glued

together.

Abruptly, Shouyou let go to stare at him, eyes wide with apprehension.

"You don't want to?" He asked, voice suddenly meek.

Tobio blinked, frown disappearing.

"That's not it, stupid." He said firmly, and watched as Shouyou immediately relaxed.

"Then, why?" Shouyou questioned. Then, with a somewhat disbelieving noise, he asked incredulously, "What, you don't think we can do it?!"

Surely that wasn't it! Tobio was cocky as heck when it came to volleyball but he made up for it by being actually great at the sport. Even an amateur as Shouyou, who has only been playing for a year or two, knew that!

Tobio sighed then promptly flicked Shouyou's forehead, ignoring his indignant whine, and continued,

"A lot of things can change. You might not even like volleyball when we get to middle school or even high school anymore."

"Haaaa? Why would I do that? And! Why do I have to be the one who changes his mind?! You can change yours too, ya know!" Shouyou said, shaking the other boy's shoulders in demand.

Tobio paused.

"Hmm, yeah."

Shouyou's jaw dropped.

"What?! What do you mean by that?! Hey! Answer me!"

##

"_Dadâ€™_"_

"_Not now, Tobio."_

##

"Hey!"

Tobio looked up from where he had been staring at the ground. Shouyou was glaring at him, hands at his hips. At that moment his best friend kind of reminded him of his mother.

"I've been looking for you all day, dumbass! Your mom's really worried about you, you know!" Shouyou said, poking him in the forehead.

They weren't in the same class this year so Shouyou hadn't seen his best friend since the other boy had dropped him off in his classroom.

He had noticed that Tobio was unusually quiet on their bike to school and had worried himself silly the all day when he hadn't seen him at lunch. After school, when he had stopped by Tobio's classroom, he'd been told he had already gone home. By the time he'd gone to the Kageyama's, all he'd found was Auntie crying in the kitchen and no Tobio in sight.

It was only a lucky coincidence when that he'd decided to go to the playground first, where he found his friend sitting on the swing set, hunched over.

Glare softening, Shouyou crouched down in front of him and gazed up at his face, leaning against his knees. Tobio was frowning so hard it was almost funny but Shouyou knew there was something really wrong just by the extra wrinkle in his forehead.

"What's wrong?" He asked, pulling at Tobio's fringe gently.

"Iâ€¦" A pause, before he sighed. "I don't want to play volleyball anymore."

Shouyou was so shocked he had fallen on his butt.

"W-what?! Are you serious?!" He demanded, world shaken. There was no way his best friend had just said that! Not volleyball-obsessed Kageyama Tobio!

Tobio only shrugged. Shouyou scrambled to his feet, hands gripping the sides of the swing, willing the other boy to look at him.

"But why? You love volleyball! You can't justâ€¦" His hands were now holding Tobio's shoulders, shaking him.

"Why?! You said you wanted to be the best setter in Japan! You said that you're going to toss for me in the Nationals! You promised that we'd play together! Are you taking it back now?!" He asked, chest aching at the thought.

Tobio wrapped his hands around his wrists tightly, making him stop. He still refused to look at Shouyou as he said, voice high and tight,

"I told you, didn't I?! People change their minds all the time and I just did!"

"Impossible!" He declared, because he knew his best friend would never, never ever, not want to play volleyball. "I know you! You don't just change your mid like that, not over volleyball! And besides! That was about me changing my mind, wasn't it?! And I haven't! I still wanna play! And I wanna play with you!"

There was no response. He let out a frustrated noise.

"Yamaâ€¦|did something happen? With auntie and uncle?" He asked softly.

Tobio only shook his head, unwilling to talk.

With a loud hmph, he pushed at his friend's shoulders until he wasn't hunching over anymore and unceremoniously plopped himself on

his lap. Tobio spluttered indignantly, trying to push him away. Shouyou clung to his neck like a limpet.

"What do you think you're doing, you dumbass?!"

"You didn't want to look at me." Shouyou said, shrugging.

"So you thought sitting on my lap was a good idea?! Get off already! Someone might see!" Tobio demanded, cheeks a bright red.

"Well, you're looking at me now, aren't you? And relax! No one's around! It's pretty late after all."

Tobio stopped struggling at that.

"Now, tell Shouyou-sama what happened!" He ordered imperiously, an impish grin on his face. His best friend rolled his eyes at him.

"What makes you think that something happened?!" Tobio sniped, folding his arms across his chest and looking away.

Shouyou tilted his head.

"You've been acting really weird since this morning, your mom was crying when I went to your house and now! Now you're saying you wanna quit _volleyball_! How is _that_ not weird?" He stated, poking the other's cheek.

Tobio swatted his hand away with an irritated _'stop that'_ and refused to speak.

"You know, I won't be getting off your lap until you tell me. And you'd just have to drag me with you if you wanna leave 'coz I'm not letting go. You should know this by now, Tobio-chan!" Shouyou teased, looping his other arm around the other boy's torso to prove it.

Tobio twitched at the nickname and Shouyou knew he was _this_ close to getting put into a painful headlock. He smiled.

"Tobio-chaaan~" He wheedled.

With a supremely annoyed huff, Tobio covered his mouth with a hand.

"Alright already! I'll tell you so quit it!" He snarled. Shouyou immediately shut up.

"Mom and dadâ€¦they've been arguing a lot lately. And now they're getting aâ€¦a divorce." He mumbled.

"What?!" Shouyou initially exclaimed in shock but after a moment's pause, he slumped.

It really shouldn't have been much of a surprise considering the amount of times he and his best friend had had to listen to their muffled arguments inside Tobio's room. At the time, Tobio hadn't wanted to talk about it and Shouyou hadn't pushed. He tightened his hold on the other boy and buried his nose in his neck.

"I'm sorry." He mumbled and felt Tobio winding his own arms around him. He gave him another squeeze.

They stayed like that for a few minutes, him unwilling to let go, wishing he could do something to make him feel better and feeling completely helpless.

"Dadâ€”heâ€”he cheated on mom." Tobio whispered against his ear, tightening his hold. Shouyou let out a outraged noise at the news. Kageyama-san really was a jerk! A big jerk!

He could feel his shirt getting wet and had to hold back his own tears. His heart was hurting and he couldn't even begin to imagine how bad his best friend must be feeling that he would cry. He'd _never_ cried before.

'I'm sorry.' He wanted to say again, but couldn't, not when he knew it wouldn't make his friend feel any better.

Instead, he held him even tighter and hoped it was enough.

##

Crash.

He stared wide-eyed at the broken vase in front of him.

"_Are you crazy?! That could've hit your son!"_

"_I'm leaving! I'm leaving, you hear me?!"_

"_Go then! Go and see your woman! You don't even care about your son anymore, do you?! You aren't just leaving me, you're leaving him too! You're the one who tore this family apart, remember that you selfish prick!"_

"_I'm sick of you blaming me for everything that's gone wrong with your life! I've given this family everything I had for years! I'm done, you hear me?! Done!"_

"_Fuck you, you bastard!"_

Slam.

##

The sun has long disappeared when they decide to go home. The streets were quiet and they only met a handful of people along the way. Which was why Tobio was confused as to _why_, exactly, Shouyou felt the need to hold on to his hand.

"What if we get lost, huh? Don't you know it's safer to stick together?!" Shouyou reasoned after the hundredth time his best friend had asked.

"What are you, a kid?" Tobio snarked back.

"Oh, come on! We used to do this a lot when we were

younger!"

"Exactly."

Shouyou rolled his eyes and smiled. No matter how many times Tobio had complained about the hand holding over the years, he'd never once let go. This time was no exception.

"Hey, Yama?" He called out after a few minutes of silent walking. Their connected hands swayed to and fro between them.

"What." Tobio deadpanned.

"I'm here."

"What?" The other boy repeated, stopping.

Shouyou looked at him.

"I'll always be here. No matter what."

Tobio raised an eyebrow.

"Duh."

##

"_Come to Kitagawa Daichi with me!_"

##

"Hey, Yama! Yama!" Shouyou called out as soon as he entered the Kageyama household, throwing a wave at Auntie before he ran up the stairs and barged into Tobio's room.

Said boy was lying on his bed with a ball in his hands. He looked to have been about to toss it up when Shouyou entered. Grinning, he jumped into the bed and lay face down on his best friend's belly.

"I saw it!" He said, words muffled by his friend's shirt. He was breathless and sweaty from biking as fast as he could back home.

"You saw what?" Tobio asked, gently prying him off and pushing him until he sat up before he started wiping Shouyou's sweat off with the tissues he had on his headboard.

"The Little Giant! I saw him!" He replied, swatting the other boy's hands away.

"The what?"

"The Little Giant! He's Karasuno's ace! Me and the others were biking around town and I saw their match on TV!" He said excitedly, waving his hands around.

"Karasuno? Isn't that the school in the next town? The one that went to Nationals this year?" Tobio asked, perking up once he recognized the name.

"Yeah, yeah!" Shouyou nodded. "He's only like, 170cm and he blasted through the other team's blockers like they were nothing, like they weren't there! He was like '_paw_'! He was flying!" He gushed, whole body trembling.

"Wow." Tobio commented, impressed. He resolved to do a little research later.

"He was so awesome! I'm gonna be just like him! I'm gonna be the next Little Giant!" He proclaimed, arms thrown up in a V. His eyes glazed over.

"Okay, future Little Giant. Before you go saying things like that, why don't you concentrate on actually _trying_ to grow taller? You haven't been drinking milk like I told you! Hey, are you listening? Hey!" Tobio hit Shouyou with his pillow to draw him out of his daydreaming and into reality.

"But Yama! You've seen my parents! They're not exactly giants or even average! I'm doomed." He moaned, lying down the bed and hugging a pillow sullenly, ignoring Tobio's milk comment. He _hated_ milk. Ugh. He didn't understand why the other boy was so adamant about it and how he managed to stomach so many juice boxes of it a day.

Tobio couldn't really say anything to that.

"Well," He pulled the pillow away and poked Shouyou in the forehead. "With my toss and your speed and jumping power, no blockers will be able to stop you. You'll be invincible." He stated confidently.

Shouyou grinned.

"We're gonna be amazing."

##

"_Well, duh, where else would I go, dumbass? You'd be lost without me!_"

##

* * *

><p>This is my first attempt at: writing a gay fic and a kid fic AU. I haven't written anything in a year so I'm rusty. I just hope it isn't utter rubbish.<p>

This is part one of three one shots in a series. I thought of making it multi-chaptered but then steady updates, something I hesitate to commit to right now, might be expected so. This part is what I call in my head as the Elementary Arc, pardon my lack of imagination.

THIS WHOLE FIC WAS JUST AN EXCUSE FOR ME TO WRITE KAGEHINA SHAMELESS CUDDLING AND NUZZLING. I wanted to put more but decided not to. There's still the next parts! I just really wanted kagehina cuddles dammit.

The next part will come when it comes. /shot

2. (this heart's got so much love to give)

****Disclaimer: ****Haikyuu! does not belong to me.

I don't even know anymore, ya'll.

* * *

><p>"Jump higher!" Tobio barked, glaring at his teammate. "How many times have you missed the ball already?!"<p>

"Ah, sorry." Kunimi muttered, not looking particularly apologetic.

"Tch."

He spun around to stare down the rest of the team, all of whom had varying expressions of distaste on their faces.

"You all have to jump faster! Higher! If none of you can even hit my tosses, what's the point of you playing?! Why are you even here?!" He said, angry because these guys couldn't even hit his easier tosses, how did they deserve to be here when Shouyou?"

"It's not our fault your tosses are so hard to hit, King. If you made it easier, then maybe we'd actually be able to score. Seriously, isn't that your job as a setter? It's only been a few months since you took over from Oikawa-senpai and you already suck at it." Kindaichi said, eyes hard.

"What. Did. You. Say." Tobio gritted out.

"Yeah, yeah!" Yamato, a middle blocker, agreed. "You keep on giving Hinata your easy tosses and having him score! We get it, he's your best friend, he's short, you wanna give him his fifteen minutes of fame, whatever, we like him and all but that's unfair man, really selfish. He's not even a regular! We work as hard as him and"

"Take that back."

"what?" Yamato asked, looking confused and increasingly nervous at the look in Tobio's face.

"Take back what you said!" Tobio repeated, voice getting louder, earning the attention of nearby club members and the coaches. The low thrumming in his temple intensified.

"Kageyama" Mitsukawa-san started.

"None of you work as hard as him"you don't know half of what he's going through"you have no right to say shit about him! Stop spouting stupid nonsense because none of you will ever be the player he is"none of you deserve to be in this fucking team as much as he does!" He bellowed, voice coming out hoarse and shaky in his anger.

The whole team stared at him wide-eyed, shocked at his outburst. The

gymnasium was quiet except for his harsh inhalations and he couldn't hear anything but his own loud heartbeat and the pounding in his head.

"Kageyama, go cool your head. Come back when you're not about to blow your head over some of your teammate's honesty. Not only are you our setter, but you're a senior. Think before you speak next time." The coach scolded, voice firm and disapproving.

Feeling oddly betrayed, Kageyama could only stare at him incredulously because _what?_ What did he just say? The coach also knew about Shouyou's struggles, saw him practice every day. What part of the bullshit that Yamato had said was honesty?

"Go."

Grinding his teeth and clenching his fists, he turned and marched out the door, slamming it closed behind him and taking satisfaction at how loud it was.

He was bent over the outside sinks, cooling his head off under the water's spray, when he felt something drape over his shoulders. Keeping his eyes closed, he groped for the faucet, shut it, and straightened up. Immediately, he felt hands gently dry off his hair, calming him considerably more than the water had. He let himself enjoy it for a few moments before he spoke up.

"Shou."

"Hm?" came the soft reply.

He felt the towel pat his face dry, still painfully gentle.

Tobio gripped Shouyou's wrists, stopping his ministrations. He opened his eyes and saw his best friend's expression. The words he was about to voice abruptly dried out.

"Don't be so hot-headed next time, dumbass Kageyama." Shouyou chided, pulling at his fringe and giving him a soft smile. His eyes were shining and his lips were wobbling, trying so hard to keep the smile pasted on his face. Tobio felt a lump form in his throat and tightened his grip.

He bowed his head and nodded.

##

"One more!" Shouyou screamed breathlessly.

Tobio stared at him, eyes narrowed at his best friend's slumped form. He was exhausted and it was showing, which was worrying because his stamina was almost always endless. He couldn't even stand properly anymore, with legs shaking visibly, and his face was dripping with sweat, hair matted down and lacking its usual vibrance.

"You're exhausted, dumbass! Don't keep asking for more!" Tobio scolded, ignoring the looks they were garnering from their teammates.

He stomped towards his best friend, intent on dragging him off and

getting him to rest, even if it meant he had to be chained against a tree.

"Please! One more!" Shouyou pleaded, looking at their coach, who only shook his head.

"No. You need to learn to pace yourself. Exhausting yourself everyday will not result in your improvement. You will only do yourself harm in the future if you continue." The coach stated, giving him a disapproving shake of his head.

Shouyou looked devastated.

"But Coach! I need toâ€"

"You need to realize that you are not fit to become a regular at your current state. There are other players who are better than you in everything, your quicks with Kageyama notwithstanding. The only thing you can do now is practice, at a healthy pace, and better your overall performance. I don't need a player who is only good at spiking. You will have your shot at the Interhigh next year."

"But Iâ€"

"Shou."

His best friend turned to look at him, quietly imploring. He shook his head. Shouyou blinked, and slowly clenched his fists, visibly frustrated but willing to concede.

"Osu."

Later, as they were walking towards the train station, the sun slowly descending behind them and the silence between them strained and unnatural, Tobio spoke up.

"Coach was right. You need to pace yourself better. You're going to get hurt if you keep doing what you've been doing."

He glanced at his side and was surprised to see his best friend not at his usual spot beside him. He turned slightly and found him a few steps behind. He stopped and turned fully to face him.

"Hey, did you hear me?" he asked. "Oi!"

"But it's not fair!" Shouyou exploded, making Tobio jump in surprise. "How am I supposed to get better if I don't practice hard enough?! I know my receives suck and my serves are unusable and I'm too fucking short to be anything but a libero! I want to get better at them fast! I want to spike your tosses! I want to play in the court with everybody else! I don't want to get left behind!"

Shouyou's eyes were shining and red around the edges. He'd obviously been trying to hold back his tears the whole way. Tobio had noticed them earlier but had chosen not to comment because he hadn't wanted to embarrass him. He felt a prick of guilt at not doing anything sooner.

"I hate this! I'm trying so hard to get better but it doesn't feel like it's enough! At this rate, I won't get to play with you on

matchesâ€”I have to keep practicing! I have to get better soon! I have to catch up to you!"

He sighed.

"Okay."

Shouyou blinked in confusion.

"Huh?"

"Okay." Tobio repeated. "We'll keep practicing before and after practice, at lunch, at corridors, at home, _anywhere_â€”we'll keep practicing. You're going to get better."

And Shouyou, with his shining eyes, gave him a shaky smile.

"Osu."

##

"If you had to choose between having each other versus being able to play volleyball, which one would you choose?"

Tobio glance at Shouyou, seeing him mirror his own confusion at the question. They both turned to Izumi.

"What do you mean?" Tobio asked, tone unnecessarily harsh. Seriously, what was up with that question? It was dumb. He was about voice how stupid it was when he felt Shouyou's elbow dig into his side, his best friend giving him a _look_ over the bag of meat buns he was currently rummaging in. They'd bought it as treats after managing to survive the hours and hours of speeches over their graduation ceremony. The principal, in particular, had a lot about to say about spreading their wings and flying out of the nest, which what? They'd graduated from _elementary school_, not high school.

Stupid principal, he grumbled internally.

"E-eh? Umâ€”" Izumin flustered, looking down at the ground.

Shouyou nudged him, offering the bag.

"There better be some pork curry left." Tobio threatened, narrowing his eyes at the other boy suspiciously.

Shouyou waved him off, shifting his grip on his bike to adjust his bad. It was probably digging on his shoulders again. He made a mental note to check out some bags the next time they went to the shopping center. Shouyou's birthday was still a few months away but it was better he bought a gift early so he could hide it somewhere while his best friend wasn't snooping around trying to look for it.

"I meanâ€”" Izumi spoke up again, scratching the back of his head awkwardly. "Me and Koji were talking about how you guys are obsessed with each other and volleyballâ€”"

"_We are not_!" came their immediate protest, although at this point of their friendship they all knew it to be true and they only offered

protests because it was habit and also because Tobio thought it was embarrassing to outright admit it. He still had his pride, darn it.

"and if there was ever a chance where you'd choose one over the other, what that choice would be?" Izumi finished, ignoring them.

"What's it to you?" Tobio couldn't help but snap, irritated.

Shouyou rolled his eyes and regarded their friend thoughtfully.

"Eh, why do we have to choose one when we can have both?" Shouyou asked, eyes bright and intense in the way it always was when he managed to spike Tobio's fastest tosses, which was becoming more and more frequent these days. Tobio couldn't help a smirk at the thought, feeling a bit proud.

He reached out and ruffled Shouyou's hair in agreement, eyes glued to his best friend's answering grin.

Izumi hummed.

"Well, I guess you're right."

##

'I want to be like that.' Tobio thought, watching Oikawa's back arch gracefully and the ball soar through the air from his careful fingers. He marveled at his easy command of the team, his good-natured banter with the ace, his cool, calculated manner of using each player's strengths, turning weaknesses into well-honed weapons and _wanted_.

"Eh, you're better!"

Thrown out of his thoughts, he turned to look at Shouyou, immediately noticing the uncharacteristic sour look in his face, eyebrows pinched together and eyes narrowed at their seniors. He was pouting.

"What's up with you?" he asked, tone unconsciously harsh. "What're you sulking about now?"

Shouyou looked at him, expression now earnest.

"He's good but you're better! There's no need to look at him like he's _that_ great, 'cause he's not. Not at all."

Something warm bloomed in his chest and spread up his face. Suddenly, he felt hot. Frowning, he turned back to the match in front of them.

"Shut up, dumbass."

##

They called him the King of the Court, Tobio knew. He wasn't stupid enough to not realize what it meant. It wasn't a compliment, no matter how much Shouyou insisted that it was. He knew he was seen as a tyrant, a dictator, because he was demanding and relentless. It was

always whispered behind his back as he served, and spat in his face after another missed toss.

It was fair, he thought. He'd rather be the self-centered king who conquered. He'd earned them wins, didn't he? He worked hard to be able to give out his tosses, and he expected people to do the same kind of work to spike them. Volleyball wasn't a game to be half-assed, after all. Either you did your best or you got out of the court. Winners won because they worked for it, talent was nothing if you had no skill.

Players who half-assed didn't deserve to be on the court.

It was fair, he thought, as he watched Shouyou face among the audience. He was cheering as hard as he could, turning his voice hoarse so Tobio could hear _You better win this for us you bastard!_ clearly among the other noise, could know that he wasn't alone even if he didn't have his best friend on the court with him.

Why should he be merciful when his teammates didn't work hard enough for their place on the team? Always complaining about practice being hard, how it was cutting into their social time, how they couldn't get girlfriends, how they couldn't even go on vacations_. Then why are you even here?_ Tobio wanted to snarl at them. _Why can't you be grateful that you're on the team? _He wanted to scream at them. _Quit already, so Shouyou can play. _He wanted to demand. _None of you deserve your place!_

He didn't care about being called a selfish king. He would be selfish, hoarding his best tosses and doing his best best, _best at everything else _because Shouyou couldn't play yet. Shouyou couldn't play with him yet, so he had to win for the both of them. He had to. Losing wasn't an option.

He served.

##

"Ouch! Hey! Stop it already! I'm fine!" Shouyou whined, arms up to defend himself from Tobio's assault.

"Obviously not, dumbass!" Tobio snapped, pulling the arms away from his friend's face. He glared at the scratches and the darkening bruise on Shouyou's face, seething.

"But Yama! You're hurting me!" Shouyou insisted, wrapping his fingers around Tobio's wrists, eyeing the cotton ball and antiseptic he was holding in each hand and cringing.

Tobio felt the low thrumming in his temple grow stronger and sighed.

"Stop being a baby!" he scolded, shaking off the restraining fingers. "You can take falling on your face multiple times so you can take this!"

"Butâ€”Ow! Quit it!"

"Fine!" he barked, throwing the cotton ball away in frustration. The chair screeched as he stood up and gathered the first aid supplies

from the table and angrily stomped towards the bathroom to put it back.

He hated the uncomfortable heavy feeling simmering under his skin. It made him gnash and grin his teeth, eyebrows knit even tighter and his knuckles turn white with how hard he was clenching them.

"Stupid, dumbass Hinata." he muttered, placing the kit in its usual place underneath the sink.

Straightening up, he glanced at the mirror and jumped at Shouyou's reflection standing behind him.

"Dumbass! Don't do that!" he snapped, turning around to glare at his best friend properly, feeling his heart rate slow down in increments.

Shouyou's lips quivered and his big hazel eyes watered. Tobio felt guilt pool in his stomach and got even more irritated because what the hell was he feeling guilty for?! He clearly wasn't the guilty party in this!

Rolling his eyes, he opened his arms, pretending to be as reluctant as he should be but actually wasn't. Shouyou immediately buried himself in his embrace, tucking his head underneath Tobio's chin and sniffing.

"We're too old to be doing this, idiot." he chided, although his arms tightened around his best friend nonetheless.

"I dun' care," was the muffled reply.

Shifting so he was leaning against the sink, he sighed and started rubbing soothing circles on the other boy's back.

"Are you going to tell me why you got into a fight now?" he asked.

Shouyou shook his head. Tobio couldn't help but sigh again.

"Seriously, sometimes you're more trouble than you're worth."

That statement earned him a pinch in his stomach.

"You love me anyway." Shouyou mumbled.

Tobio shrugged. Smirking, he carded his fingers through the other boy's hair, petting him for a moment before pulling hard. Shouyou yelped and immediately pushed him away, whining.

"You're so mean!" Shouyou complained. "I don't know I put up with you!"

Tobio pinched his nose, unable to help himself from teasing his best friend further. Shouyou struggled to get out of his clutches.

"Stop whining and tell me what happened already."

Shouyou stopped struggling, his outstretched arms that had been

previously waving about falling to his sides. Tobio straightened at the look on his face, his hand dropping as well.

"What happened?" he repeated, tone turning serious. "Have they been harassing you again?"

Some of their teammates constantly heckled his best friend about his height and he knew that Shouyou was as insecure about it as he always was.

Shouyou shook his head.

"You know I don't care about that."

Tobio snorted but bit back his reply. There were more important things at hand here.

"They kept calling you that name and they wouldn't listen to me when I told them to quit it."

He couldn't help rolling his eyes at that.

"You know I don't care about that."

And wasn't that the truth. He really couldn't care less what they all thought of him and it always baffled him as to why Shouyou was the complete opposite.

"Well, I care about it." Shouyou snapped at him.

Tobio felt an eyebrow rise.

"At first I thought it was really cool that you got called 'king', because it meant other people thought you were awesome too, right?" Shouyou continued, ignoring his expression, and looking furious now. "But I heard a bunch of guys talking about it, calling you selfish and mean and a tyrant andâ€"and it's not fair!"

"But I am, though. I am selfish and mean and demanding." Tobio cut in, confused as to why Shouyou was bothered by all this. It was just a name, wasn't it? And it wasn't like he hadn't earned it. He was demanding because he needed the other players to give their all at their games, not just a half-assed play, against even the weakest teams. He was mean because he still wanted to be the best, and being nice wasn't going to get him at the top.

"Yeahâ€"but they don't know why. They don't know you're demanding and relentless because you work twice as hard as them when they think you're just using your talent and they always think they're already strong enough when they could be better. They don't know that you're selfish because of me. Because I can't play with you and you don't want other people spiking your tosses, because most of the time they're for me and you've never had anyone else hitting them so you don't know how to adjust when you know they can be spiked. They don't understand anything about you and it makes me so mad that they'd say things about you when they don't know anything."

By the end of his tirade, Shouyou was panting and looked ready to cry again, sniffing slightly and rubbing his eyes furiously. He looked frustrated and exhausted. Tobio stared at him.

And_ this_ was why Shouyou was his best friend, why anyone wouldn't even come close to his importance on Tobio's life. Shouyou was all kinds of stupid and annoying, he was clingy and possessive, always whining and demanding attention, but he _cared_. He was stubborn, he was kind and patient and loyal and Tobio would sooner give up on volleyball than give up on Shouyou.

Which was to say, _never_.

Tobio firmly ignored the warm, fuzzy feeling in his gut and reached out to grasp bright orange hair. He took a moment to marvel at its softness before he pulled at the fringe again. Shouyou yelped.

"Seriously, you're going to make me bald if you don't _stop doing that_! Owâ€"owâ€"ow!"

"Dumbass!" he said, paying no attention to the other boy's grumbling. "Stop worrying about stupid shit like that. I don't care about them and what they say so you shouldn't either."

"Butâ€"Yamaâ€"OUCH! _HEY_!"

"Forget about them and let's go. I wanna see if you're receives and serves are still shit, 'cause if they are you better believe I'll have you do a thousand. Each. _Every. Single. Day_. " He stated, keeping eye contact and seeing Shouyou's eyes widen in horror.

Satisfied that Shouyou was appropriately cowed, he let go of his hold and dragged his whimpering best friend to the his house, where the flimsy net that they considered a court was waiting for them.

##

"I'm Kageyama Tobio from Akiyama Elementary School. I've been playing volleyball since second grade. I look forward to working with you."

"That's a pretty early start." The coach commented, eyes looking him up and down critically. "What position do you prefer?"

Tobio's gaze, which had previously been directed at the coach, shifted to the older boy behind him. Oikawa Tooru, reported to be the most promising setter in the prefecture and the mind behind the great plays that had gotten Kitagawa Daiichi going head to head with Shiratorizawa Middle School Academy's ace. The older boy gave him a curious rise of an eyebrow.

"I'm a setter."

##

"Are you sure you're not lost?"

Tobio watched red erupt across Shouyou's cheeks at the upperclassman's quip and frowned.

"Y-yes! I'm Hinata Shouyou from Akiyama Elementary and I've been playing volleyball since my second year. I want to be the ace!"

Immediately, the surrounding upperclassmen erupted into laughter.

"You?! An _ace_?! Are you joking?!"

"Man, he must be! There's no way such a little guy would be an ace! No way, no way!"

"Are you sure you didn't mean libero, short stuff?"

He felt his eyebrows twitch, gritting his teeth. He rarely, if ever, tolerated other people bullying his best friend. He looked at Shouyou and felt pride at the fact that he hadn't made any visible reaction to their taunts. His height would always be a sensitive topic and it would always hurt when it was thoughtlessly thrown in his face. Shouyou's ears were red and his hands were clenched but his shoulders were still straight and his eyes were as bright as they always were when he was holding a ball.

Tobio relaxed, his lips forming a small smirk.

"I may be small but I can jump!"

##

"Nii-chan! Nii-chan! Tobio-nii-chan! Welcome hooooome!" Natsu exclaimed as soon as Tobio opened the door and removed his shoes, arms outstretched.

Obliging, he bent over and scooped her into his arms. She nuzzled his neck and giggled as he tickled her side.

"I'm home." he called out, setting down his bag in the living room before padding to the kitchen where auntie Hinata was currently preparing dinner. She turned from the stove at his arrival and gave him a fond pat on the cheek.

"Welcome home, Tobio-chan. I hope you're hungry, we're having curry tonight."

He nodded.

"Is Shouyou still at school? I asked him to buy some ingredients at the store."

"He dropped by at the one a few blocks away. He was taking too long so I came ahead. Did you have him buy a lot? Should I go back?" he asked, prying Natsu's fingers away from his hair. She had had a strange fixation on it since she was a baby, which resulted in him losing a bunch over the years whenever he carried or played with her.

"No, it's okay. I only had him buy some milk and potatoes. I forgot to buy some when I went earlier." she replied, turning back to her cooking. "Oh! I almost forgot. Your mother called, she said she was planning on visiting next week."

Tobio blinked, surprised. His mother hadn't mentioned anything about visiting when she'd called a few nights ago.

"Did she say why?" he asked, cautious. He hadn't done anything wrong, had he? His grades were okay, that is, he wasn't in any danger of failing any class, and he hadn't gotten into a fight since his first year.

"Hmm, no, not really." she said, thoughtful. She gave him a smile over her shoulder and Tobio marveled at how identical it was to her children's for the hundredth time. "I suspect she just wants to see you. She is your mother, after all. Mothers always worry when they're apart from their children. And anyway, she hasn't visited for a few months, has she?"

"Yes. She's been busy. I justâ€"she doesn't need to work. That bastardâ€"I mean my father gives us more than enough." He mumbled, conceding defeat and letting Natsu do what she wanted with his hair, enduring patiently.

"Your mother has always been the independent, career-oriented type. She has her pride as a woman and a mother. She wants to provide for you too. But," at this she turned to face him again, a serious expression on her face, "You know she loves you, right? She would pack her bags and quit her job to come home if you ever said so."

He swallowed the sudden lump in his throat and nodded, uncomfortable.

"I just wish she didn't have to _come home_ in the first place," he couldn't help but say. Auntie always seemed to have the power to make him say the things he didn't want to say to anyone, much more than his own mother. "I don't want to be a burden."

She gave him a look, eyes shrewd, before smiling softly, reaching out to pat his cheek once again.

"We love you, Tobio-chan. You're a Hinata, even if a piece of paper says otherwise. Same with your mom. A burden, you are definitely not. Okay?" she said quietly, but it hit him in his chest. He wasn't sure what to say and could only manage a soft,

"Yeah."

She turned back to the stove just as Natsu started squirming and demanding attention, apparently having had her fill of his hair for the moment.

"Nii-chan! Play!"

"Now, now, Natsu-chan. Tobio-nii-chan just got home. He needs to rest." Auntie chided.

"Butâ€"but!"

Tears were rapidly gathering in Natsu's eyes as she stared at him pleadingly and even though he _knew_ he was being shamelessly manipulated by a toddler, he quickly relented.

"It's okay. We didn't do much at practice today. I can play with her for a while." he offered, much to Natsu's screaming delight.

"Well, if you're sure. Dinner will be ready in half an hour."

He nodded and carried the babbling toddler to the living room, listening to her trying to decide whether she wanted to play tea party or house.

Shouyou got back just as the tea party had turned into Tobio teaching Natsu the finer points of tossing.

"Brainwashing her already, Yama? You've been working hard." His best friend quipped after watching a fascinated Natsu trying to keep up with Tobio's increasingly complex explanations.

He frowned.

"Shut up."

"Nii-chan~!" came the toddler's joyful cry as she pounced on her older brother.

"You're gonna drop her." he warned as Natsu wriggled jubilantly in her brother's arms.

Shouyou laughed.

"Don't be such a worrywart! I have her, she's fine. Right, Natsu-chan?"

"Right!"

Tobio rolled his eyes.

##

There was only about ten minutes left of the lunch break and Tobio could feel his stomach rumble with hunger. He caught the ball as it descended and straightened up from his receiving crouch.

"Hey, let's stop."

Shouyou immediately pouted.

"But I still wanna practice!" he whined, and Tobio wanted to hit him.

"We haven't even eaten lunch yet, dumbass. I'm not going to skip lunch just for you."

At that, his best friend gave a start, rubbing his stomach. Tobio snorted and went to where he'd placed their bentos by a nearby window.

"Oh, yeah." Shouyou brightened. "What did you make me today? Ugh, is it something with those weird protein powders again? I hated those!"

"Stop whining! See for yourself!" Tobio snapped, pushing the packaged

lunch into the other boy's arms and sat down, watching as he carefully pried the cover open.

"Uwah! It's a volleyball bento! With a crow! With orange hair! Is it me?!" Shouyou exclaimed. Tobio was pretty sure his best friend was close to crying in joy, there were actual tears gathering in his eyes.

"You've been working hard." He grumbled, turning his attention towards his own lunch. Unlike Shouyou's, it was simple but still pretty tasty. He was grateful that his mom had had the foresight of teaching him how to cook over the years. He liked to do their lunch in an effort of lessening auntie Hinata's workload and so far they had all been edible.

Suddenly, there were arms around him, and Tobio almost had his lunch wasted. Annoyed, he elbowed Shouyou to let him go but the other boy didn't budge.

"Hey! I'm trying to eat here!"

"I love you so much, Yama," was whispered against his ear.

Tobio felt his face heat up and couldn't resist a soft dumbass in reply.

##

Tobio heard the crowd's incredulous whispers as Yamato was subbed out and Shouyou came in. He smirked.

"Not bad for an official debut eh, Hinata? Three years in the making!" Kindaichi said as Shouyou got into his place in the current rotation.

"Better late than never, I suppose." Kunimi quipped quietly from his place at the back.

"Yeah." Shouyou said, attention trained on their opponents at the other side of the net.

Tobio doubted he'd heard their teammates. His eyes were focused and the fluidity of his movements told Tobio that his best friend was at the top of his form. Definitely not bad for his first game.

"Shou." he called out, immediately earning a glance from the other boy. He held out a fist.

Shouyou's eyes lit with understanding and he quickly turned to bump his fist against Tobio's.

"We're going to win." Tobio stated matter-of-factly.

The answering grin made him feel warm down to the tips of his toes.

##

"Man, I kind of feel bad for Hinata-senpai. He works so hard for something he'll never get, you know?"

Tobio stopped dead in his tracks, the milk he'd bought from the nearby vending machine halfway to his mouth.

"Yeah, yeah. It's like, he's just wasting his time! Why doesn't he just become a libero?! But then again, his receives suck! They're worse than mine and I'm a total beginner! Hasn't he been playing for like, seven years now?"

"His jumping is the only thing that's impressive about him and that's just because he's so short! I don't think he'll ever be tall enough for any other position."

"In fact, he should just give up on volleyball altogether and play another sport like baseball or something else that doesn't need height. He always looks pathetic."

**BAM.***

All three underclassmen jumped and turned around, their eyes growing wide with fear when they saw him and the overturned garbage can under his foot.

"Kageyama-senpai!"

He narrowed his eyes at them and sneered.

"Don't talk smack about a guy who works ten times as hard as you. I'd like to see any one of you do Hinata's practice routine, instead of gossiping like a bunch of old maids. I doubt you'd even last an hour, judging by how you whine during practice."

He shifted his glare to the one who'd had the gall to call Shouyou pathetic.

"You. Come with me." he barked, relishing the jump and panicked expression it earned him.

He turned and started walking.

"Quit riding your school's coattails. None of you even deserve to be on the team." he threw over his shoulder as they departed.

"S-senpai?" the underclassman in question squeaked out after they'd been walking for a few minutes.

"Hinata runs with the track team every morning before class and practices his receives and serves with the volleyball girls' team during lunch. Then he joins the basketball team every weekend for his jumps. Any free time he has he spends with me practicing our quick." he narrated, glancing at the other boy and smirking at his dumbfounded expression.

"Iâ€"I seeâ€"|"

They turned around a corner and continued walking until they arrived at the gym the girls' volleyball team used. Already, he could hear Shouyou's enthusiastic yelling accompanied by the familiar sounds of balls hitting various surfaces and appendages. He led the

underclassman inside and towards the captain.

"Excuse me."

She turned to him curiously. He gestured toward the other boy.

"My kohai told me would like to join your team's practice alongside Hinata. Would that be okay?"

Satomi-san, looking highly amused, shrugged. The underclassman's face fell. It seemed he'd actually been hoping that she'd turn him down. Tobio smirked. As if. In exchange being able to practice with them, Shouyou had to help clean up the gym after they were done. He doubted Satomi-san would turn down any extra help.

"He's welcome to try and keep up with my girls. We're not in the top four in the prefecture for nothing. Although, Hinata-kun seems to be enjoying himself so I think I need to improve our training regime further. Can't have the boys' team thinking they're better than us, can we?" Satomi-san said, lips stretching into a wide smile that sent shivers up Tobio's spine.

He nodded in thanks, unable to say anything in the face of her smile.

Shouyou, having finally noticed them, came bounding over with a grin like an overeager puppy. Tobio braced himself for the incoming tackle-hug that his best friend never failed to give him at every opportunity.

"Yama!" was screamed in his ear. Tobio winced. "What're you doing here?! Came to see how awesome I'm getting, did you?!"

Ignoring his clinging best friend, he turned his attention to the underclassman he had brought with him, idly wondering what his name even was. It was something with an H, wasn't it? Hibiki? Hidataka? _Hiddefumi? _Well, considering that he'd said 'pathetic' and 'Shouyou' in the same sentence, he figured it wasn't worth the effort of trying to remember.

"You're going to start doing the same practice routine Hinata does from now on. Don't worry, I'll talk to the Coach. He won't say no."

There was something really juvenile about enjoying watching hope wither out and die in someone's eyes, but whatever.

"B-butâ€"Senpaiâ€"! "

"Oh? Are you saying you can't?" He narrowed his eyes and relished the other boy's gulp. "_Pathetic._"

"Iâ€"that's notâ€"I meanâ€" "

"Whaaaaat? You're gonna join me?" Shouyou tilted his head delicately, like a curious bird. There was a look of concern on his face that Tobio could immediately tell was fake. He raised an eyebrow. Had Shouyou overheard this particular underclassman talk shit about him too?

"Are you sure you can handle it?" his best friend asked, tone holding the same note of concern his face was projecting.

The other boy turned a bright red.

"Iâ€"that isâ€"YES!"

Immediately, Tobio could see the horror and regret the annoying brat felt at his own proclamation. He hummed and turned to Shouyou, who now sported a familiar mischievous expression. Tobio almost, almost felt sorry for bringing the pitiful guy here.

"I'm leaving him to you, then." he stated.

Shouyou grinned wolfishly.

"Leave it to me!"

He wondered if he should feel guilty but opted not to dwell on it. It wasn't often his best friend got to play pranks on anyone but Tobio and seeing they only had a few months left till graduation, he decided to let him have his fun and leave it at that.

A week later, the underclassmanâ€"who was apparently named Hayato or Hayate or possibly even Hataki, he didn't care enough to checkâ€"resigned from the club.

Judging from Shouyou's gleeful expression, Tobio thought it was best not to ask.

##

Tobio watched the ball zip through the air, the feel of it in his fingertips as he'd tossed it lingering seconds after it left, and knew without even looking that Shouyou was already flying, eyes closed and palm open. The loud sound of the ball slamming into the ground was even more satisfying that it usually was because Shouyou was here. His best friend was playing in the court, with him. Right where he belonged.

And the crowd went wild.

##

It wasn't like Tobio didn't understand why the very sight of Shouyou on the courtâ€"short, delicate-looking Shouyou, with his bright hair and small shoulders and skinny bodyâ€"baffled people, because he did. He wasn't stupid, not as much as his best friend insisted that he was anyway, and he was most definitely not blind. He knew Shouyou though, knew that his height was just thatâ€"a number that could be changed, a hurdle that could be overcome â€"and it wasn't as much as a weakness that people thought it was. He knew him better than anybody, maybe even better than he knew himself.

Some days though, Tobio worried that maybe he was helping him push himself farther his body could take and Shouyou would break, just like that, wide smile gone and bright eyes dimmed. Some days, as he watched his best friend struggle to overcome something out of his control and face people's genuine and constant disbelief, he blamed

himself for introducing volleyball to the other boy's life. Maybe, if he hadn't, Shouyou wouldn't have an almost crippling insecurity about his height; maybe he wouldn't have to hold back the persistent urge to maim as he watched his best friend push and push and push himself to be better and inevitably collapse in exhaustion, unable to hold back his tears of frustration as he asked why his body was betraying him.

Maybe he should've just quit all those years ago, when his dad had left, Shouyou wouldn't have followed him to Kitagawa Daiichi in the first place and maybe they'd actually enjoy being in middle school, no stupid competitions, no exhausting practice, no teammates and senpais that brought them down instead of up, never have to think about getting better, better than everyone in the prefecture, the country, always straining for that elusive _number_ _one_.

Maybe they both would've been happier, without volleyball.

Tobio watched Shouyou's delicate form as he jumped, throwing his all into it like usual, small hands slamming the ball down and sending it spinning away, and marveled at the beam directed his way.

"Yama! Did you see that?!"

_I would give up __**anything**__ to keep you smiling like that.

-

"How awesome was that?! One more!"

And Tobio remembered the countless grins exchanged over successful quicks, the hugs shared on improved plays, the warmth of meat buns after practice, Shouyou's quiet breaths as he slept on the bus beside him after practice matches and the small smiles as they played volleyball because they were together, doing something they _loved_.

Was it weird that his fondest memories were because of volleyball?

"That better not have been a lucky shot, dumbass!" he called out.

"Shut up!"

##

"I'm going to put you in the reserves."

Shouyou jumped up in excitement, and Tobio automatically pulled him down to his previous seat without a word, wanting to hear the coach talk without having to listen to his best friend's joyful exclamations. It was only a little less than two months until the Interhigh and the coach had called them all to a meeting after their usual practice to discuss the player rotation. He nudged Shouyou in the side to calm him down. The other boy immediately latched onto his arm. Tobio rolled his eyes before turning back to the coach.

"You've been improving these past few months," the coach continued, unperturbed. "I'm willing to overlook the fact that your serves and receives still aren't up to the standards I like my players to be in

for your quick with Kageyama. It'll be our trump card."

They nodded.

"I need you two to keep at it. Make sure it's at the best it can be by the start of the competitions."

"Osu!"

The coach turned to the others.

"As for the rest of you, I'll be incorporating Hinata's training regime with yours. I expect it will bring even more improvement to all of you."

There were groans all around. They exchanged grins.

##

Why isn't anything working?! Why can't we get through them?!

Toss. Spike. Block.

Left, two blockers. Right, open, no—he can't attack. Weak spiking power, won't get through.

Libero? Out. Receivers—no. Too close, too close.

Run, run—**there**!

Toss. Miss.

"Move faster!" he barked, eyes on the ball.

Where—where—where's the ball?!

Receive! Receive!

Toss. _Miss—

"JUMP FASTER!" he demanded.

Get the ball. Get the ball!

"Calm down, Kageyama. You're not helping!"

I can't lose now. I promised—

##

"This is the last time I'll ask you. Will you come with me, Tobio?"

"No."

His mother sighed heavily, rubbing her temples. The kitchen air felt hot and oppressive, the warm summer sun setting down and casting shadows through the window.

"Why not?" she questioned, looking at him.

He shrugged.

"This is about Shou-chan, isn't it?" she asked, tone weary but amused.

Blink.

"Sweetheart," she reached out to take his hand in hers. "I know your best friends and I know you don't want to be separated but sooner or later it will happen."

"But it doesn't have to be now, does it?" he stated, taking his hand away and standing up.

"Tobio!"

"Why do you even have to leave anyway?" he asked, looking his mother in the eye, feeling frustrated and confused. "That bastard!"

"_Tobio!_"

"still sending us money, right? You don't need to work."

You don't need to leave, he wanted to say but couldn't get it passed through the lump in his throat.

His mother's gaze turned sad and Tobio hated it, hated seeing it back on her face after it had finally disappeared, just like he'd hated seeing it every day years after his father walked out on them. She reached out to frame his face in her gentle hands, eyes soft.

"Honey, that money is meant for you. Your father still loves you no matter what may happened between us. I don't want to take it from you and I don't want to keep depending on him. I don't want it. I'm still young, the company I used to work for has offered me my previous position and I intend to take it. Besides, your college education won't be cheap."

"I'll work hard to get a sports scholarship," he declared. "I can do it."

She smiled and Tobio felt his chest constrict.

"I know you can. I believe in you, Tobio. But I'd rather we have some money saved up, okay?"

Seeing that she wasn't about to relent on the issue, he nodded reluctantly. With a deep breath, she let go of him and stood up.

"Well, now that we've established that you're not coming with me, I need to make arrangements with the Hinatas."

##

Tobio watched Iwaizumi and Oikawa argue, slightly unnerved by the look on Oikawa's face earlier. He didn't understand what he'd done or

said to earn such a look. Was he not allowed to ask the seniors for advice? Was that how volleyball clubs or clubs in general worked?

'I'll ask again tomorrow," he decided. 'Maybe he'll change his mind.'

Resolute, he turned to head back to the club room and was surprised when he found Shouyou behind him, arms crossed.

"Shou, what is it?"

Shouyou tilted his head, saying nothing. He had that weirdly intense look on his face and Tobio felt a pinprick of uncomfortability. It wasn't usually directed at him and for the first time he felt a smidge of sympathy for the people who had suffered it before. Only a tiny, microscopic smudge though.

"What?" he snapped, feeling his hackles rise after a few more moments of staring.

"Let's go home." Shouyou said instead of answering, turning around to leave. Tobio followed.

The walk towards the clubroom was silent and continued as they took their customary showers and changed into their school uniforms. The silence wasn't really uncomfortable or anything, only thoughtful on Shouyou's part. Tobio could sense that his best friend was working through a problem that was bothering him enough to quiet him and he didn't want to interrupt. He missed the chatter, though.

They were halfway through the journey to the station when Shouyou spoke up, startling Tobio out of the pleasant blankness his mind was in when going through motions long memorized.

"Is Oikawa-senpai that good? Good enough that you'd go through all the trouble to learn from him?"

Tobio glanced at him, puzzled.

"Yeah. They say he's the best setter in the prefecture."

"But he couldn't even beat Shiratorizawa's ace, right? He couldn't be _that_ great." his best friend said, now looking peeved.

He stopped mid-stride, frowning at the other boy. What was up with him?

"What is this really about?" he asked.

"What? Nothing!" Shouyou denied, shifty-eyed.

_Bullshit. _

"Tell me." He demanded. "It's got something to do with, right?"

"No! It's nothing!"

"Shou." A note of warning.

Shouyou opened his mouth to no doubt spout more denials but paused at when he saw Tobio's expression. He heaved a sigh, staring at the ground, and mumbled his answer. Irritated, Tobio snapped.

"What?! Quit mumbling and tell me properly!"

Eyes flashing, Shouyou blurted out, "You've been staring at him and obsessing for weeks now! I don't like it!"

Tobio couldn't believe what he was hearing.

"You're jealous?!" he asked incredulously, watching red creep up his best friend's face and to the tips of his ears.

Shouyou didn't reply, lips turned down into a pout and eyebrows into an uncharacteristic scowl. Impossibly, infuriatingly, Tobio felt his heart flutter at how seriously, seriously dumb Shouyou was and why did he like the guy in the first place anyway?

For reasons unknown to him and he suspected would forever remain a mystery, Shouyou was possessive of him. Forget about clinginess, but possessiveness? He really couldn't figure it out no matter how much he'd tried to over the years. Shouyou didn't like it if Tobio's attention was on anyone else but him, turning vicious and lashing out, and although he'd gotten better at it as they'd grown up, there were still times it would flare up and make a mess of things, like now. Shouyou's constant demand of his attention had troubled their parents so much they'd actually had Shouyou go to a therapist for it, which hadn't really resulted in any improvement whatsoever because he was stubborn and thick headed, like the idiot that he was. The only thing that had worked was when Tobio started ignoring him whenever he acted up and hadn't that been a revelation?

Tobio sighed.

"Dumbass. You're so ridiculous."

The pout turned down even further and why was this life?_

"Bakageyama! You can't call me that when you're as much of an idiot as I am!"

"You're so dumb, like really dumb." Tobio said, ignoring his outburst. "I don't even know why I'm friends with you. So dumb."

"Stop saying that!"

"Dumbass Hinata!"

Shouyou stared at him, caught off guard by the tone of his voice.

"Stop being stupid."

There's no one more important than you. _

The other boy's eyes widened in realization, then sparkled with so much joy Tobio could see metaphorical hearts in his eyes.

Embarrassing.

"C'mon. I'll treat you some meat buns."

Shouyou cheered and Tobio felt his heart warm.

Seriously, why were they even friends?

##

â€"_faster, faster, FASTERâ€"

â€"_have to get better, have toâ€" _

â€"_I have to win can't lose now I
can'Tâ€"

â€"_can'tlosecan'tlosecan'tloseSHOâ€"

The sound of the ball hitting the ground,
emptyempty_empty_â€"

There was no one there.

##

* * *

><p>Sooooooooo:<p>

1. I'm sorry

>2. English is haaaaaaaaard
3. I may have gotten overboard.

Yandere! Hinata is a thing for me. Barely managed to restrain myself from going all the way.

>4. I love long-suffering! Tobio so much I may have OOC-ed him. I am sorry.
5. Writing is hard. *sobs*

>6. I didn't make a mistake writing this, right?
7. Hopefully there aren't any glaring errors in grammar/typos. If there are, please tell me so I could remedy it ASAP. (I might edit it all the way anyway once I've actually gotten enough sleep.)

>8. I am so so so sorry.<p>

End
file.